

**The first in a four-part
interview series with quilter
Joyce Muller**

I became friendly with Joyce Muller about five years ago when I joined the Great South Bay Quilters guild. Joyce has recently turned 90 years old and seldom comes to monthly meetings. Yet, she remains active, donating many baby and veteran quilts each year. I was curious to learn more about this amazing quilter. So, on a rainy August day, I paid Joyce a visit. The afternoon turned out to be an amazing look into the many craft interests and talents of this esteemed senior member.

Susanne: How long have you been a member of the Great South Bay Quilters guild?

Joyce: I don't know... probably 14 or 15 years.

Susanne: What brought you to the guild?

Joyce: I had heard [about the guild] through an acquaintance. I decided to check it out and see if it was something I would enjoy. As it turned out, I've enjoyed it very much. [Especially] the people and the exchanging of ideas and patterns.

Susanne: Do you belong to any smaller groups within the guild?

Joyce: Yes, I belonged to the applique and the embroidery groups, [the latter of] which was short lived.

Susanne: Tell me about the applique club.

Joyce: Applique is one of my favorite forms of quilting and Audrey Collins got me involved.

Susanne: What is your earliest quilting memory?

Joyce: Well, I was born and raised on a farm outside of Cooperstown, New York. Our whole world was the farm and our animals. [Daily farming chores,] that came first. That was our livelihood. But, when there was time, that's when families taught their children the things they needed to know. In our case, fun stuff like knitting, crocheting, and sewing... my sister took to the piano, and I took to the creativeness.

The first thing I remembered being taught was [how] to hem my father's handkerchiefs. Then, as

far as quilting goes, was [how] to make potholders. You never made anything *just because*. It had to have a purpose... Later, I worked on [simple] patchworks and then embroidery and applique. [Over time,] it morphed into baby blankets and quilts. These items were made to be functional; they weren't just for *pretty*. Quilts were often made of old clothing. When the clothing could no longer be patched, it was cut into pieces for bed quilts. These were often called patchworks because they were all patches of things [repurposed for an everyday use].

We made *pretty* quilts too. These were usually made by a group of women as a wedding gift. These [groups] were [like] the old-fashioned quilting bees. A group of us would get together at someone's house. We'd decide on the pattern and who would make what portion of the quilt. Usually, each person's portion would be done over the winter months. Early spring, before growing season, or late fall, when the harvesting was done, these were times when we would get together and complete the quilt as a group... It was a community gift.



Next edition: Joyce's Favorites!